

Sparky the dog is depicted in a 3D, stylized illustration. He is wearing a yellow and red firefighter's helmet with the letters 'SP' on it. He is also wearing a yellow and red striped jacket. He is holding a black megaphone in his right paw, which is extended towards the right side of the image. The background is a dark blue gradient with a large, bright yellow circular light source behind the text.

GET READY!

*Preparing
Your Community
For a Disaster*

®

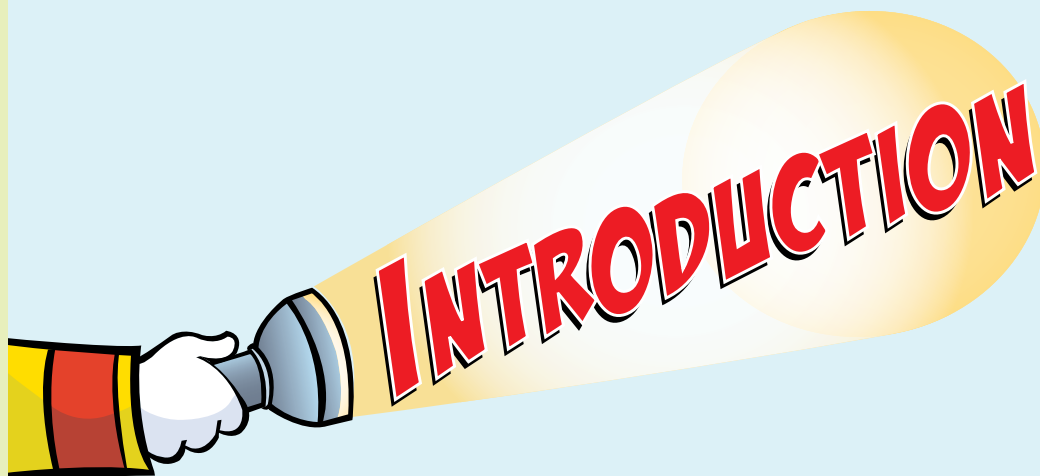


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A Safer Community—for Everyone

Recent disasters have shown just how much communities count on their firefighters and other first responders to keep them safe and protected. But Hurricane Katrina, the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, and other catastrophes have also revealed the strains placed on our emergency personnel during times of crisis. Today, more than ever, first responders and local residents must work together to prepare their cities and towns for disaster.

For firefighters and public safety advocates that means reaching out to members of their communities with essential safety information. To aid in this life-saving work, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has developed this comprehensive guide and mailed it, free of charge, to every fire department in the United States. The goal is simple: to give firefighters and other first responders the tools they need to help local residents prepare for disaster—before disaster strikes.

Expert Advice and Training Tools

The following pages offer everything you need to get started, from easy-to-follow training tips to helpful hints on raising money for your safety programs. To gather this expert advice, we went straight to the source: safety advocates who care first and foremost about the well-being of their communities.

You'll find a detailed lesson plan in this guide along with training tips, and evaluation ideas. The CD includes a PowerPoint presentation to use during your trainings, as well as handouts, including disaster preparation tips for special audiences and fact sheets on what to do before, during, and after a disaster.

Have a Plan

Recent disasters have taught us that no single preparedness tool is more important than a plan: an understanding of what to do, where to go, and how to survive in a disaster. But when it comes to helping their communities prepare for disaster, fire departments need a plan of their own. We hope that this guide can be such a plan. So what are you waiting for? **Let's get started!**

HOW TO USE the Essentials of Disaster Preparation Guide

1. Review the guide and CD.
2. Decide on a time and place to conduct a presentation to raise disaster preparedness awareness of citizens in your community.
3. Promote the presentation in your community using local media, church groups, the library, or other sources.
4. Ask a local business, such as a hardware store or an insurance agency, to support the event by copying handouts, providing snacks, hosting the event, or offering door prizes.
5. Duplicate handout materials from the CD.
6. Practice the presentation.
7. Create a sample emergency supplies kit to use as a demonstration prop during your presentation.
8. Arrive at the facility early so you have time to organize your presentation.
9. Conduct the presentation. Be sure to allow time for questions.
10. Visit www.nfpa.org/disaster to complete the **Get Ready Survey**, providing NFPA with feedback on your experience using the guide and handout materials.



Disaster Defined

Disaster (di'zāstur): An event resulting in great loss and misfortune; natural or man-made processes that impact society and the built environment.

Disasters take many forms:

- Hurricanes
- Wildfires
- Earthquakes
- Tornadoes
- Floods
- Landslides
- Severe Winter Storms
- Public Health Emergencies (i.e. flu pandemic)
- Terrorism
- Blackouts
- Fires

What do these events have in common? All can potentially result in loss of life and property, as well as disrupt our daily routines dramatically. Some disasters occur with much warning, while others come from seemingly out of the blue. Regardless of the amount of advanced warning, people can prepare to some extent for every disaster.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Get Ready: Preparing Your Community for a Disaster

This guide is the starting point for your disaster preparedness outreach program. It features information on preparing, promoting, and conducting a successful disaster preparedness presentation, including background information, how to use the media to spread the word, how to keep people engaged, and how to evaluate your success. We've also included additional sources for information and sample letters and press releases.

CD

The CD provides all the support materials needed to execute your program successfully, including handouts in English and Spanish and a PowerPoint presentation that you can customize. We've included fact sheets on disasters detailing what to do before, during, and after each event.

Conducting an Effective Presentation

Be prepared. Nothing is more important than being adequately prepared for the presentation. Being prepared includes having a thorough knowledge of the community's disaster risks, practicing the presentation to ensure a smooth delivery, being able to use the audiovisual equipment without problems, and having confidence in your ability to deliver a professional presentation.

Know your audience. Several characteristics of the target audience may impact how you deliver the presentation. First, what is the audience's disaster experience? Do they live in an area that has experienced disasters? Have they attended previous disaster preparedness presentations? Are they able to act on your recommendations?

Make the presentation personal. Personalizing the presentation will go far in terms of gaining the trust and involvement of the participants. Use pictures of the actual community rather than stock pictures from commercial presentations. Seeing a local business or landmark helps audience members feel the presentation is speaking directly to them. Also, focus on risks specific to your community. If your community has experienced significant disasters, use those experiences to highlight the need for preparedness. This helps overcome the "that-won't-happen-here" mindset. Use the past to teach about the future.

Keep it simple. A common mistake made by community safety educators is trying to provide two hours of information in a 30-minute presentation. Make your presentation simple and easy to understand.

Make the presentation interactive. Interactivity is important to keep the audience engaged. Your audience is going to have questions about disaster preparedness. When appropriate, ask questions of the audience. The lesson plan in this guide provides some sample questions.

Reinforce the presentation with handouts. You won't always be able to answer all questions or provide detailed information on every topic due to time restraints. The CD included in this program has handouts to support your presentation in English and Spanish.

Ensure that citizens are able to take action. Most likely, some groups in your community are not able to take action on all your disaster preparedness recommendations. This lack of ability may be due to a lack of financial resources, physical challenges, or lack of transportation. Providing the means for every group to act on your recommendations is essential. This may mean developing financial support for an emergency supplies kit or developing a community emergency response team (CERT) to transport older adults to shelters when needed.

The solutions to these challenges may involve partnering with other agencies, organizations, and citizen groups.

Hurricane Katrina

Hurricane Katrina, one of the deadliest hurricanes in the history of the United States, devastated New Orleans and much of the Gulf Coast. But the ferocious storm also revealed key failings in the ability of our communities to prepare for and respond to disasters. Tens of thousands of citizens were unable or unwilling to evacuate, despite warnings from local officials. And it took days, even weeks in some cases, for emergency personnel to reach individuals who had been stranded by the hurricane. Even families and individuals who thought they were ready for such a disaster found that they weren't prepared for weeks without electricity, fuel, and other basic supplies.

"People were self-sufficient for a day or two, then, it got rough," recalls John Thomas, the emergency coordinator for the city of Hammond, Louisiana, 50 miles north of New Orleans. "Having a plan is not necessarily the same as being prepared," notes Thomas. The storm also shed a harsh light on the ability of firefighters and other first responders to function effectively in the wake of a disaster. Katrina knocked out the communications networks of fire departments all along the Gulf Coast. Individual firefighters suffered personally along with everyone else who endured the storm's wrath.

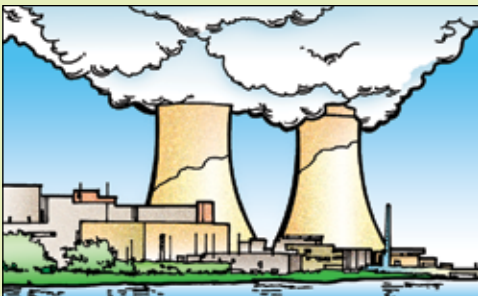




Laying the Groundwork

While fire departments and other emergency service providers may have different missions and responsibilities during ordinary times, speaking with one voice in a disaster is absolutely essential.

"We have to work as a team," says Dena Schumacher, public information officer for the Champaign, Illinois, Fire Department. To that end, Schumacher recently sat down with all of the public information officers in her county, representing police and fire agencies, hospitals, city, county and regional emergency management services, the chamber of commerce, as well as key charities, such as the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army. The goal: to ensure that in an emergency, all of these entities communicate the same safety messages to their communities.



PREPARING FOR THE PRESENTATION

Select a Site for the Presentation

Choose a site that will allow a professional delivery while drawing the most citizens.

- Your audience should know the site, which should be readily accessible, including handicapped accessible. Public buildings are the most desirable because they are typically well known and are generally accessible to everyone.
- Consider the amount of seating. If you are expecting 50 participants, you must have at least that much comfortable seating.
- The participants must be able to see and hear you, as well as see any audiovisual materials you will be using. Some of your presentation may include a digital slide presentation; be sure everyone can see it.
- If people will be driving to the site, ensure adequate parking.

Promote the Presentation

One of the tasks that will have the greatest impact on the success of your presentation will be effectively promoting it to the community.

1. The first step in promoting the presentation is to identify who you want to attend, otherwise known as the target audience.
2. Determining how your target audience receives information is the crucial step in the promotional process. As a general rule, always use multiple methods for disseminating information to the target audience. Some groups have unique sources for information, and if you don't use these specific sources you will never reach the group.

If you are trying to reach the community at-large, or a general audience, the most effective resource is the mass media, including television, radio, newspapers, and the Internet. Other ideas for promoting the presentation include:

- Information in church bulletins
- Local cable
- Town hall
- Local newspaper

Gather Materials and Equipment

Generally, you will need the following materials:

- **Handouts.** You will need enough handouts for each anticipated participant. Handouts in English and Spanish can be found on the enclosed CD.
- **Props.** Assemble an emergency supplies kit to use as an example for presentation participants. Be sure to include water; food; samples of prescription medications; a battery-powered radio and/or a hand-cranked radio, a NOAA weather radio, extra batteries; flashlights with extra batteries; a first aid kit; a whistle; dust masks; towelettes; blankets; garbage bags; a wrench or pliers to turn off utilities; a hand can opener; and local maps. Also include anything pertinent to disasters more likely in your area. If volcanoes are a threat, for example, include safety goggles and something to cover your nose and mouth. Put everything in a portable container.
- **Name tags.** For smaller groups, provide name tags to help you make questions and discussions more personal.

- **Digital file.** If you are using audiovisuals, ensure you have the presentation with you on a CD or other suitable storage device. If you are using your own laptop computer, have the file on the desktop ready to use and have a back-up file.
- **Evaluation forms.** Bring at least one evaluation form for each participant. Evaluation forms can be found on the enclosed CD. Also, bring pens or pencils.
- **Refreshments.** You or the sponsor may wish to serve refreshments.
- **Door prizes.** Some educators like to provide door prizes as part of the presentation. If so, gather your door prizes in advance and decide how you will select the winners, such as a random drawing or by answering a question.

Gather Your Equipment to Support the Presentation

- **Audiovisual equipment.** If you are using digital slides you will need a computer and digital projector.
- **Sound system.** If the site is a large auditorium or meeting room you may need a sound system.

Set Up the Site

- Plan on arriving at the site at least one hour before the presentation start time to give yourself plenty of time to set up and be prepared to meet participants as they arrive.
- When you arrive at the site, inspect the meeting room. Decide where you will put your audiovisual equipment and the table for handouts. Remove any hazards, such as loose cords.
- Arrange the seating as needed. Remember, do everything possible to maximize the ability of the participants to see and hear you.
- Set up the audiovisual equipment. When possible, make sure you can move around the room without walking in front of the projector. Use duct tape to secure any extension cords or electronic cables.
- Once the equipment is set up, turn it on and ensure all controls are working. Running through your digital slides can't hurt.
- If you are expecting a large group, place a table near the entrance where you can distribute the handouts. Be sure the table and equipment does not block any emergency exits.
- Put out refreshments.

Deliver the Presentation

You are now ready. Welcome the participants and begin the presentation.



Walking the Walk

Ask William Timmons where firefighters should start in their disaster preparedness efforts and the public education coordinator for New York's Ridge Road Fire District has a quick answer: with the firefighters themselves.

"As a fire department we need to educate the public, but we also have to teach ourselves. You need the confidence that things can function at home without you," says Timmons. For his department, near Rochester, New York, that means preparing for flooding, blizzards, major snow storms, and ice storms that can result in power outages of up to four or five days.

For firefighters on-duty during a disaster, notes Timmons, it may be days before they're able to get home. He encourages firefighters to have a week or two of supplies on hand at home and an emergency supplies kit at home and at work. And to make sure that his message is getting across, Timmons has been reaching out to a key constituency: the wives, husbands, and significant others of firefighters.

"We're having them come in and take an emergency preparedness class."

Sample Press Release:

Send this release out at least two weeks before your presentation. Put it on your organization's letterhead or on the letterhead of the sponsoring organization.

For Release On:
For More Information, Contact:

Month/Date/Year
Your Name
Your Telephone Number
Your Town/City

Your Town/City Fire Department Offering Disaster Preparedness Training

Your Town/City — As part of a community-wide disaster preparedness outreach effort, **Your Town/City** Fire Department will be presenting a training session for residents on **Date**. The session is being held at **Location** beginning at **Time**.

This one-hour session will provide residents with an overview of the importance of disaster preparedness and what residents can do to help make **Your Town/City** safer, stronger, and better prepared to respond to the threats of disaster—natural, unintentional, and intentional.

Every year in the United States, disasters disrupt thousands of lives. A disaster can strike anytime, anywhere. Every community in every state has the potential for a disaster, leaving no one immune from the possibility of an event striking their community.

"Disasters may give little or no warning," says **Your Name/Title/Organization**. "At times you may have time to prepare and take appropriate actions. Other times, you will only have time to take immediate action to protect yourself and those close to you."

During the informational session, residents will learn how to assemble an emergency supplies kit, help people with disabilities and other specific needs plan for a disaster, access available resources, create a family emergency plan, and more.

Educational materials for the training session have been provided by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) with support from U.S. Department of Homeland Security/Office of Domestic Preparedness.

Space is limited; please call **Your Name/Title** at **Phone Number** to reserve your spot.

#

Objectives:

At the end of the presentation, participants should be able to:

- ✓ describe the community's potential disasters;
- ✓ create a family disaster plan; and
- ✓ build an emergency supplies kit.

LESSON PLAN

45–60 Minutes

Materials:

Laptop computer; projection screen; easel pad, stand, and markers; emergency supplies kit; handouts from CD; evaluation form from CD; digital slides from CD; presentation roster; pens or pencils; handout listing and illustrating the local emergency shelter in the community; handout illustrating emergency evacuation routes.

I. INTRODUCTION *5 minutes*

Format: Lecture/Discussion

Engage the audience throughout the presentation—ask questions, allow them to share stories.

A. Administrative Details

1. Fire alarm. Explain to participants what the fire alarm at your presentation site sounds like.
2. Emergency exits. Point out the exits to participants in case an emergency prompts an evacuation during your presentation.

B. Introduce Yourself

Print your name and contact information on an easel pad. Reveal the sheet during your introduction so that participants will have the correct spelling of your name and your contact information if they need assistance following the lesson.

C. Motivate Participants

Engage the audience—ask questions. Getting the participants to understand the importance of disaster preparedness is critical. Use the following disaster facts to explain the importance of the disaster preparedness information in the presentation. If available, provide local information about previous disasters. Disasters can happen anywhere. Every community in this country is susceptible to one or more types of disasters.

ASK: What do you know about disasters and disaster preparedness?

Allow participants to share their thoughts.

ASK: What do you want to learn about disaster preparedness?

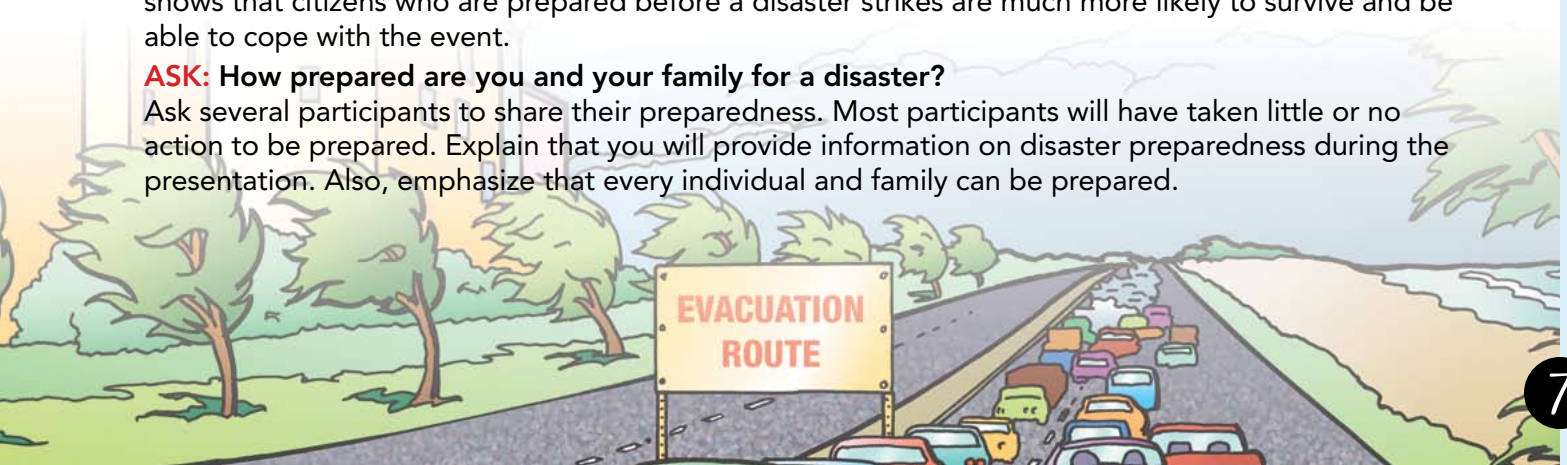
Record participant answers. At the end of the session you can review the list to make sure all concerns have been addressed.

ASK: What is the best strategy for your family or those in your household, to survive a disaster?

Briefly discuss the answers. Explain that the best strategy is to be prepared. Emphasize that history shows that citizens who are prepared before a disaster strikes are much more likely to survive and be able to cope with the event.

ASK: How prepared are you and your family for a disaster?

Ask several participants to share their preparedness. Most participants will have taken little or no action to be prepared. Explain that you will provide information on disaster preparedness during the presentation. Also, emphasize that every individual and family can be prepared.



II. OVERVIEW OF DISASTERS *10 minutes*

Format: Lecture/Discussion

The purpose of this section is to review the key facts about disasters. If appropriate, provide facts about previous disasters in the community. By the end of the section, participants should clearly understand the disaster risk. Use the following speaking points to build this understanding.

A. Key Facts about Disasters

1. What is a disaster? A disaster is an event resulting in great loss and misfortune; a natural or man-made process that impacts society and the built environment.
2. Every year in the United States, disasters disrupt thousands of lives. Disasters take many forms, including floods, hurricanes, terrorist attacks, tornadoes, wildfires, earthquakes, blizzards, droughts, fires, and terrorism, and always have some impact on the people involved.
3. A disaster can strike anytime, anywhere. Every community in each state has the potential for a disaster.
4. Disasters may give little or no warning. At times you may be able to take appropriate actions in advance. Other times, you will only have time to take immediate action to protect yourself.
5. Following a disaster, government agencies and other aid organizations may take time to get to you. In some extreme cases, relief aid may be limited or not available for several days. Preparedness is the responsibility of every individual and family.
6. Being prepared individually, as a family, a neighborhood, or a community is the best strategy for surviving a disaster. Experience repeatedly proves that people who are prepared in advance of the disaster have a greater chance of surviving and recovering from the event. In short, nothing replaces proper preparedness.

B. Local Disasters

Use this section to provide information on disasters that have previously struck the community. Invite participants to share their experiences with disaster.

C. Citizen Preparedness—Before the Disaster

1. Know the risks and danger signs of disasters that could strike the community.
2. Develop plans for what to do if a disaster is imminent or if one strikes.
3. Assemble an emergency supplies kit.
4. Volunteer to help others including neighbors and family members.

D. Citizen Preparedness—During the Disaster

1. Put your plan into action.
2. When possible, help others.
3. Promptly follow the advice and guidance of officials in charge of disaster response and recovery.



III. EMERGENCY PLAN *10 minutes*

Format: Lecture/Discussion

Here, you will provide information on the elements of a disaster emergency plan.

LESSON PLAN

Continued

A. Parts of an Emergency Plan

1. Escape or evacuation routes
2. Family communications
3. Utility shut-off and safety
4. Vital records
5. Specific needs
6. Caring for animals
7. Safety skills

B. Escape/Evacuation Routes

1. Each family should have an escape route from their home, apartment, mobile or manufactured home and the location of the meeting place.
2. A meeting place should be established outside the home.
3. Identify the best evacuation routes from work, school, and home. The routes should be based on pre-designated routes identified by local emergency managers.

Note: Encourage parents to talk to school administrators and all caregivers to learn the plans in place while children are in their care. Then families can consider these plans in their own family plans.

C. Family Communications

1. The family may not be together when a disaster strikes. During a disaster an emergency plan will ensure that each person can account for other family members.
2. Each family member should carry an emergency contact card. In addition, parents should ensure that each child's school keeps an emergency contact card on file.
3. Designate an out-of-town relative to call if a disaster strikes. The relative can then account for the status of all family members.

If available, distribute family contact cards to each participant.

D. Utility Shut-Off and Safety

This is a local decision. Please be prepared to give local instructions to attendees.

1. Leaking natural gas following a disaster is a frequent cause of fires.
2. If you hear a hissing sound or smell natural gas, get out of the home immediately and shut off the gas.
3. Because of the danger involved in shutting off the gas, have a representative of the local gas utility demonstrate the proper method.
4. Once you have turned the gas off, only a professional should turn it back on.
5. If water is leaking, or if the safety of the water source is suspect, shut off the water and the main home valve.
6. If the home's electrical system is damaged, find the circuit box and shut off all individual breakers. Then shut off the main breaker for the panel.

E. Vital Records

1. Every family should have property, health, and life insurance. Flood insurance may be available.



2. Make a record of all personal property. In addition, make a video showing the interior and exterior of the home and all valuables, such as furniture, electronics, and so on.
3. Store important vital records, property records, copies of insurance policies, and the video in a safe deposit box or other secure location away from the home.

F. Specific Needs

1. If you have a specific need, be sure to address it in your disaster plan. Some specific needs may include:
 - a. use of hearing aids
 - b. medications
 - c. mobility impairments
 - d. transportation limitations
 - e. special dietary needs
2. Create a network of family and friends who are informed of your specific needs and who can help during a disaster.
3. Keep special items or supplies ready and in easy reach.
4. Make provisions for obtaining medications.

G. Caring for Animals

1. Plan for pet care, which includes identifying available boarding facilities and pet-friendly hotels.
2. Gather a stock of pet supplies, such as food and extra water.
3. Keep proper identification for the pet, including shot records, on file.
4. Purchase a pet carrier or leash.
5. If your pet is a large animal, such as a horse, identify several methods for transporting the animal if needed.

H. Safety Skills

1. Family members should know how to administer first aid and CPR. Courses for these skills are readily available in most communities.
2. Another source of training is the community emergency response team training (CERT).

Answer any questions about the disaster emergency plan.

IV. EMERGENCY SUPPLIES KIT *10 minutes*

Format: Lecture/Discussion

Present an emergency supplies kit by using an example kit. Also, distribute a supplies kit checklist so that participants can follow the checklist during the discussion. Engage the audiences as you review the emergency supplies kit—ask questions.

A. Emergency Supplies Kit

1. An emergency supplies kit provides essential items for survival for the time between the disaster and when supplies or services are available through the government or relief agencies.
2. Your emergency supplies kit should provide supplies for a minimum of three days; a 7-day supply is best, with a 3-day supply ready to take with you.
3. Maintain your supplies kit over time to ensure supplies are fresh.



B. Locations for the Emergency Supplies Kit

1. Home. The emergency supplies kit should be in a location that is easily accessible and will be protected from the effects of a disaster.
2. Work. The emergency supplies kit should be in a single container that allows the person to "grab and go." People should keep comfortable walking shoes at work, as well.
3. Auto. People should keep a basic supplies kit that includes food, water, first aid supplies, and battery cables in their vehicles.

C. The Water Supply

1. Individual needs for water will depend on physical characteristics, outside temperature, and so on.
2. The best source of water for a supplies kit is in-date, commercially bottled water.
3. Each person requires a minimum of one gallon of water per day. Hot weather may cause people to require more water.
4. Keep at least a 7-day supply at home with a 3-day supply ready to take with you.
5. Change the stored water every six months.

D. The Food Supply

1. Avoid foods that will cause thirst.
2. Stock canned foods, dry mixes, and other food items that do not require preparation or cooking.
3. Ensure all foods are within the safe consumable date.
4. Include a hand can opener in the supplies kit.

E. Items for the Emergency Supplies Kit

Direct participants to follow the emergency supplies kit checklist handout.

1. At least a 7-day supply of food and water at home with a 3-day supply ready to take with you;
2. Portable, battery or hand-cranked radio or television and extra batteries;
3. Flashlight and extra batteries;
4. First aid kit and manual;
5. Sanitation and hygiene items;
6. Matches in a waterproof container;
7. Whistle;
8. Extra clothing;
9. Kitchen accessories and cooking utensils;
10. Photocopies of credit and identification cards;
11. Cash and coins;
12. Specific needs items including prescription medicines, contacts, and so on;
13. Items for infants; and
14. Any other unique needs.
15. Entertainment items such as books, pencils, paper, playing cards, etc.

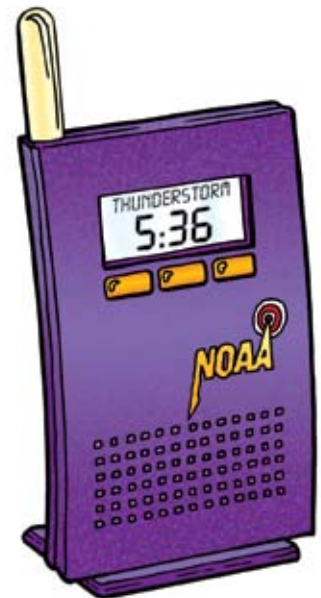
F. Maintaining the Emergency Supplies Kit

1. Keep food supplies in a dry, cool place.
2. Store boxed food in a tightly closed container.
3. Discard any food supplies that have past their expiration date.
4. Place new items in the back of the storage area.
5. Change food and water supplies every six months.
6. Update the items in the supplies kit as needed.
7. Keep the emergency supplies kit in an easy to carry container for "grab and go," such as a plastic tub or duffle bag.

Answer any questions about the emergency supplies kit.

G. Personal Pack for Kids

1. Include books, crayons, and a favorite stuffed animal.





V. LOCAL DISASTERS *10 minutes*

Format: Discussion

Distribute fact sheets on local disasters. In this section, focus on local disaster risks. The best approach is to use the handouts on the various specific disasters contained on the CD. Address the key points for each disaster—what to do before, during, and after the event. Answer any questions about the disaster and appropriate actions to be taken.

Provide information on how emergency information is communicated to local citizens. Engage the audience—ask questions about the various disasters you review.

VI. CONCLUSION *5 minutes*

Format: Discussion

Summarize the key points of the presentation. Also, answer any remaining questions.

Key Points

1. Disasters can strike anytime, anywhere.
2. When a disaster strikes, each person is responsible for ensuring their own health and safety.
3. Government agencies and other relief organizations may take several days to help the general population. During this time, each family must be able to meet their own needs.
4. Disaster preparedness is the key to surviving a disaster.

ASK: Are there any questions about anything addressed during this lesson?

Answer any questions. Thank the participants for their attendance and attention.

Evaluating the Presentation

Focus on evaluating three parts of the presentation: the speaker, the information, and the environment. A simple presentation evaluation form, like the one provided, is the best tool to gather this information.

Evaluating the Action Taken

Evaluating the actions taken by the participants after they leave the presentation is a challenge, but it is important to the success of the program. Though you could use several strategies, the most reasonable method is to send surveys to a sample of participants two to four weeks after the presentation.

Approximately two to four weeks after the presentation, mail a survey to a random sample of participants. A good rule of thumb is to send the survey to a quarter of the participants. Keep in mind that you should only expect to get 10% of the surveys back. Be sure to include an addressed, postage-paid return envelope. A sample letter and survey are included on the CD.

Once the results of your post-presentation surveys have been developed, share them with those involved in the program, including the speakers and the sponsoring organizations. Also, use the local media to report the results to the community to show that your program is working and to create additional interest.

Personal Pack for Children

Have children create a personal pack using a backpack or canvas tote. Include things like their favorite book, paper, crayons, stuffed animal, or favorite blanket. These familiar things will help keep them comfortable during an emergency.

Explain to participants that different disaster risks can add items to the disaster kit. If you live in an area prone to volcano eruptions, for example, people should include safety goggles in their kits.



Identifying Risks in Your Community

You're probably already an expert regarding the particular risks that your community may face. But that's only the beginning. Effective disaster preparedness also requires that you identify populations in your area that may be especially vulnerable in a disaster. By targeting these populations in your disaster preparation efforts, you'll be making your entire community safer. At-risk groups include:

- Low-income residents, especially those lacking transportation and for whom stockpiling food and other supplies may be difficult or impossible;
- Older adults, especially those who live alone or have special medical needs;
- Young children;
- People with specific needs (includes people with disabilities, and those with cognitive disabilities. (FEMA and the American Red Cross have created a booklet providing information for this population. The booklet is available at redcross.org.)

Psychological Impact and Response

Disasters trigger a strong psychological response. The good news is that most individuals will not suffer permanent psychological damage but will experience transient and short term reactions.

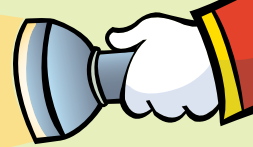
The range of reactions will vary by individual but will impact how we think, feel, behave, and express faith. Individuals will be emotionally impacted. Emotional reactions include feelings of shock, anger, anxiety, and despair. Dealing with disaster may affect cognitive abilities. People may have difficulty concentrating, remembering things, and get more easily confused. In addition, behavior may appear more erratic. Individuals may cry, withdraw, have angry outbursts, and generally be more irritable.

Our bodies are more stressed and feel fatigued during and after disasters. People often experience sleep disturbance; somatic complaints, such as headaches; and changes in appetite. They may question their faith or may become more spiritual. Strong family support systems positively impact the ability to cope. Older adults and the very young are most vulnerable to trauma in disaster.

Research suggests that some older adults might fair better psychologically following a disaster because of their life experience and sense of resiliency. The older adults who will be more vulnerable to trauma are those who are already experiencing some level of difficulty in their lives.

Children's developmental levels impact their reactions to disaster. Preschool children (age 5 and younger) may demonstrate regressive behavior, such as crying, clinging, having nightmares, and being afraid of the weather. Latency age children (age 6 to 11) will demonstrate sleep problems, irritability, school refusal, behavior problems at school, or "super good" behavior with the belief that good behavior will be rewarded with good outcomes or relief. Preadolescent and adolescent children (ages 12 and older) may exhibit somatic complaints, sleep problems, risky behaviors, drops in academic performance, and separation avoidance.

KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY



Reach Out to Community Groups

When members of the Saint Paul, Minnesota, Department of Fire and Safety Services sought to provide disaster preparedness training to the deaf community in the Twin Cities, they turned to the experts: organizations in the area already providing services to the estimated 25,000 local residents who are deaf or hard of hearing.

"It's a very well-organized community and they have the resources to provide sign language interpreters," says Paula Peterson, public education officer for the department. "I let them do the organizing because as a community they are extremely well connected." She also has some advice for fire departments and safety advocates that are interested in conducting similar outreach efforts.

"Contact existing organizations and say 'we're offering this training.' Chances are you'll get a good response."





Identify High-risk Residents

If you live in Brazos County, Texas, and have specific needs, Cindy Giedraitis wants to know about you. The public education officer for the College Station Fire Department recently began sending out a specific-needs survey in hopes of identifying older adults and other residents who may require assistance or medical attention in a disaster. Case in point: residents who depend on respirators and will need emergency generators if the power goes out. Giedraitis is currently distributing the survey through local hospitals, as well as through the department's Senior Police and Fire Academy and will send it to anyone in the county who requests it.

Psychological first aid is important for all individuals, including children, and helps reinstate a sense of equilibrium and control. The core components of psychological first aid are:

- Offering comfort
- Providing for basic needs
- Validating feelings and thoughts
- Supporting reality-based practical tasks
- Providing access to information
- Connecting to support systems
- Normalizing stress reactions
- Reinforcing positive coping skills

Additional interventions and strategies include providing accurate, honest information; allowing for expression of feelings; limiting exposure to television; encouraging resumption of normal routines; and providing games and activities.

Support

Community Emergency Response Team

When a major disaster strikes, firefighters and other first responders will need all the help they can get. The community emergency response team (CERT) program helps train people to be better prepared to respond to emergency situations in their communities. In a disaster, whether natural or man-made, CERT members can give critical support to emergency personnel and help victims. CERT members can also help with non-emergency projects that improve the safety of the community. How do you get started? To offer CERT training in your community, complete a CERT train-the-trainer course conducted by your state training office for emergency management or FEMA's Emergency Management Institute (EMI) in Emmitsburg, Maryland. CERT training includes disaster preparedness, disaster fire suppression, basic disaster medical operations, and light search and rescue operations. CERT trainings are already offered in most parts of the country and should be available in every state within the next year. For more information on starting a CERT program in your community, visit citizencorps.gov/cert.

The American Red Cross

Since before 1905, when Congress chartered the American Red Cross, it has been providing disaster relief to victims of natural and man-made disasters around the globe. Each year, the Red Cross responds to more than 70,000 disasters, including hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, tornadoes, hazardous materials spills, transportation accidents, and explosions. The majority of the organization's disaster responses are residential fires. In recent years, the Red Cross has been on the frontlines of various high-profile disasters, from Hurricane Katrina here at home, to the devastating tsunami that ravaged the coasts along the Indian Ocean. As part of its mission, the Red Cross is also charged with helping individuals prepare for disaster, a recognition that the huge social and economic costs of such crises can be greatly reduced if individuals, families, and businesses know what to do in an emergency. From helping families plan and prepare emergency kits to providing CPR and first aid training and educating communities on the special safety needs of children and older adults, the Red Cross plays a key role in disaster preparedness (redcross.org).

Fundraising

Find a Source of Funds — Tips for Soliciting Financial Support

Raising additional funds for your disaster preparedness work—and soliciting relevant supplies—can help you spread your life-saving messages far and wide. Fortunately, disaster preparedness is a cause that everyone can get behind. By reaching out to local businesses or major corporations with local outlets, you can build support for your safety programs and bring in the money to pay for them.

How to begin? Start by identifying national corporations with an outlet in your area, home-grown companies, or institutions that might have an interest in disaster preparedness. Even businesses that would seem to have little to do with preparedness often share an interest in supporting programs that work to make their community safer. These could include retail establishments that sell items recommended for inclusion in emergency kits; corporations with a strong local presence; companies in the business of safety, such as safety equipment manufacturers, installers, or retailers; or organizations with a mission to serve the community, such as banks, insurance companies, and hospitals. Ask for donations of items or for financial contributions that can be used to buy kits for residents. Whether you solicit support by phone, mail, or in person, let people know that you will follow up with them.

Sample Funding Letter:

What can you ask for?

- Duplication of handouts
- Food and beverage for your presentation
- Items for emergency supplies kits
- Door prizes

Prescription for Safety

Hurricane Katrina may have hit land more than 300 miles south of Bessemer, Alabama, but the ferocious storm forever changed the town's attitude towards disaster preparation.

"We're doing everything we can ahead of time to reach out to our older adult population, especially those that are out there on their own and may not have transportation," says Deputy Fire Chief Gary Carter.

To offer protection to Bessemer's older adults in an emergency, the fire department recently joined a number of city and county agencies in an agreement to open a medical need shelter in the Bessemer City Center.

Dear **Name of Contact**:

Town/City/Province Fire Department will be conducting a disaster preparedness training session on **Date**. The training will be held at **Location and Time**. Our goal is to get the word out to local citizens about the importance of preparing for a disaster.

I'm writing to ask **Name of Company/Organization** to support the **Town/City** Fire Department as we teach residents how to take personal responsibility for the safety of family and neighbors in times of disaster. Your financial support would also help us **provide food and beverage for attendees, distribute door prizes, and purchase items for an emergency supplies kit** for this event. By contributing \$____, you'll be demonstrating your commitment to making **Town/City** a safer place.

In return, we'll recognize your support by **clearly explain how you plan to promote the Company/Organization's support of this program in your community**.

Because we all know that **Name of Company/Organization** cares deeply about the well-being of families of our community, the **Town/City** Fire Department thinks you would be a natural partner for our exciting upcoming event. Through **Name of Company/Organization's** support, the **Town/City** Fire Department will reach more **Town/City** residents than ever.

I've enclosed some materials from the campaign **print out sample handouts from CD** to help familiarize you with the program. I'll follow up with you next week and look forward to speaking with you about ways we can work together to make **Town/City** a safer place. I can be reached at **Phone Number** if you have any questions. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

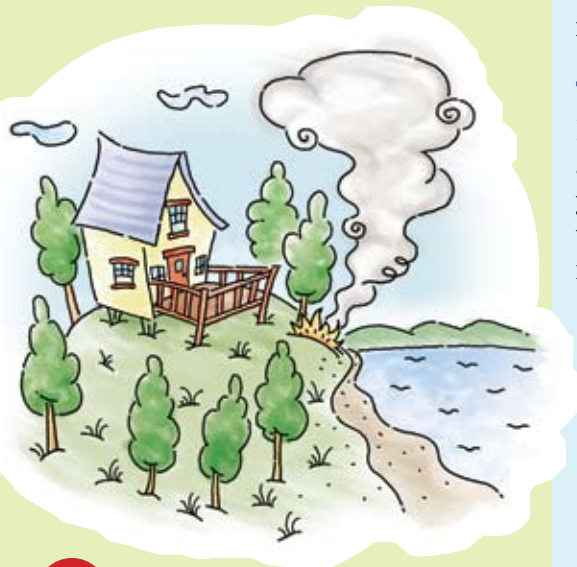
Your Name/Title

Disaster Travel Plans

Disability advocate Michael Collins came face to face with his own vulnerability in 2003. The executive director of the California State Independent Living Center (CALSILC), who is quadriplegic as a result of a spinal cord injury, was attending a meeting in San Diego, CA, when wildfires began to encroach upon the city.

"The fires were within a mile and a half of where I was," recalls Collins. "I ended up getting blocked in and having to be shuttled around with other evacuees." While Collins was finally able to make it home, the experience changed his personal approach to disaster preparedness—he notes that while he'd long had a plan in place at home, he'd never anticipated having to respond to a disaster while traveling. It also crystallized for Collins the vital importance of helping people with disabilities prepare for emergencies.

"Whether it's a fire, an earthquake or terrorism, if emergency preparedness people can prepare to protect these vulnerable populations, we'll make sure that the general population is even more protected," says Collins. "This isn't anything extra. It has to be part of the fabric of preparing for disaster."



Covering the basics of disaster preparation and having a sample emergency supplies kit to show members of your community is just a start. From evacuation guidelines to tips on protecting key documents, you'll want to communicate other essential safety messages, as well.

When to Go

If local officials issue an evacuation order, leave as soon as possible. Such orders are not made lightly. Coordinating your evacuation plan when you create your family's disaster plan is a good idea. Ensure that you've tested the evacuation routes and that you have planned several in case roads and routes are closed. Evacuation will probably take longer than expected, so leave extra time.

Family Communication is Key

In a disaster, having a plan in place to communicate with other family members is absolutely vital. Ask an out-of-town friend or relative to be your "family contact." After a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance. Make sure that all family members know your contact's phone number. You may also want to carry an emergency contact card in your wallet that lists contact information for each family member, as well as your out-of-town contact person.

Utility Shut-off

This is a local decision. Provide local instructions to attendees. Once it's safe to return home, leave natural gas on for heating and cooking unless local officials advise otherwise. If you do turn your gas off, a licensed professional is required to turn it back on. Unplug appliances and turn off the electricity and the main water valve. Tip: keep a shut-off valve wrench near the water shut-off valve in your home.

Take Important Papers with You

Keep copies of important family records in a waterproof, portable container and keep this information in a place that is secure, yet readily accessible if you need to get it in a hurry. If possible, keep copies of this information at the home of a trusted family member who lives outside of your area, perhaps in another state. Below are some documents you may want to include.

- Driver's license or other personal identification
- Passport
- Social Security card
- Proof of residence (deed or lease)
- Insurance policies
- Birth and marriage certificates
- Stocks, bonds, and other negotiable certificates
- Wills, deeds, and copies of recent tax returns



RESOURCES

Department of Homeland Security: **www.disabilitypreparedness.gov**
Practical information on how people with disabilities can prepare for an emergency.

Federal Emergency Management Agency: **www.fema.gov**
Disaster preparedness information.

Ready.gov: **www.ready.gov**
Emergency preparedness resources including specific preparedness for pet owners, older adults and people with disabilities.

American Red Cross: **www.redcross.org/services/prepare/**
General disaster preparedness information.

American Red Cross: **www.prepare.org**
Disaster information in several languages.

Citizen Corps: **www.citizencorps.gov**
General disaster information.

National Fire Protection Association: **www.nfpa.org/disaster**
Disaster preparation and fire safety information.

National Fire Protection Association: **www.riskwatch.org**
Disaster preparation information and activities.

Humane Society of the United States: **www.hsus.org**
Search for disaster preparedness for pets and farm animals.

American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals: **www.asPCA.org**
Search disaster preparedness for pet owners.





1 Batterymarch Park
Quincy, MA 02169